



### JULIE RAND

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**Y**ou're sitting in a really nice café, one that welcomes cyclists, and chatting with your fellow riders while you sip a well-deserved coffee.

**You might be discussing the route, the scenery or the latest hack for keeping your bike on the road. But there's more than likely someone there a bit less animated than the rest, someone who's only half-listening because they're also thinking about the route home, the amount of daylight left, those looming clouds on the horizon and the possible bailout options if what was forecast as light drizzle turns into a torrential downpour – as well as whether or not that new rider is having a good time.**

That person is somebody many of us who take part in group rides take for granted: the ride leader. Without them there'd quite possibly be no quiet, interesting route to follow, no cycle-friendly coffee stop and nobody else to share the joys of a great ride with.

Nowadays it's possible to download routes from an app and go out on your own without getting lost. Yet it's so much more motivating if somebody else has taken the time to plan a ride, so that all you have to do is turn up at the meeting point at the allotted time with a functional bike and kit.

Although you alone are responsible for making sure you're prepared for a group ride, many leaders will have a wealth of experience in keeping groups together to make sure everyone enjoys themselves and gets home safely. Some may also be able to help with things like minor mechanicals or spare clothing. At the very least, you will have someone to ride with who wants you to enjoy cycling in the local area as much as they do.

### LEADING LIGHTS

Group rides have always been a central part of Cycling UK's history, offering members the opportunity to cycle in

Left: Robert Tomlin